## Mining Was Reported

The announcement from Cairo on May 23 that the United Arab Republic was blockading the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping was followed by a few hours by unofficial reports that the narrow mouth of the gulf was being mined.

The authoritative Egyptian newspaper Al Ahram reported the next day that a part of the four-mile-wide channel beneath the fortress of Sharm el Sheik had been mined. The open channel, it was reported, could easily be patrolled by Egyptian ships.

No ship, the article said, could run the risk of steaming through the minefield without the guidance of patrol boats.

Some doubt as to whether the passageway into the gulf from the Red Sea had actually been mined was raised by the Israelis, who, with the aid of binoculars, observed several freighters arriving at the Jordanian port of Aqaba, just across the border from Elath, Israel's sole outlet to the Red Sea.

The Strait of Tiran is commanded by Sharm el Sheik, whose guns can reach any vessel proceeding in or out of the 100-mile-long Gulf of Aqaba. For most of its length it separates the eastern shore of the Sinai Peninsula from Saudi Arabia and at its northern end are Elath and Aqaba.

Israel was said to have had limited countermining and minesweeping capabilities. She is reported to have four submarines and two ships in the destroyer class, while Egypt has nine of the former and six of the latter. Both nations have a number of smaller craft, such as torpedo boats and patrol vessels.

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